

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 27 and 29 as shown below. The claims are "clean version" of the amended claims, i.e., with changes incorporated into the claims, whereas the Appendix to this Amendment illustrates the amended claims using underlines and brackets to indicate addition and deletion, respectively.

SUB B2

27. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a plurality of instructions, the plurality of instructions including instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the steps of a method for coding an input object mask, where said input object mask has a plurality of regions, said method comprising the steps of:

A2

- (a) assigning at least one symbol to each of the plurality of regions;
- (b) coding said assigned symbols of the input object mask;
- (c) decomposing said input object mask into a plurality of object mask layers;
- (d) coding a base object layer of said plurality of object mask layers; and
- (e) coding a next higher layer of said plurality of object mask layers in accordance with information from a lower object mask layer.

SUB B3

29. An apparatus for coding an input object mask, where said input object mask has a plurality of regions, said apparatus comprising:

A3

- means for assigning at least one symbol to each of the plurality of regions;
- a first means for coding said assigned symbols of the input object mask;
- means for decomposing said input object mask into a plurality of object mask layers;
- a second means for coding a base object layer of said plurality of object mask layers; and
- a third means for coding a next higher layer of said plurality of object mask layers in accordance with information from a lower object mask layer.